

IN MEMORY
OF
M. F. P.

~~A 4~~

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Memorial and Remains

OF

MARY FRANCES PRESTON.

"She is not dead, but sleepeth."

BELFAST:

MDCCCLXV.



MEMORIAL.

“Weep not ; she is not dead but sleepeth.”—Luke v. 52.

THE narrative connected with the few documents which follow is very simple, and need be no other than equally brief. Little more is required than to record that MARY FRANCES PRESTON was born on October 15, 1844, and died on the 16th May, 1865.

If it be, then, true of all that

“Brief life is here our portion”—

still more strikingly true is it of one thus early “cut down like a flower.” Her early morning had scarcely reached Life’s day-time when the place that knew her here knew her no more : although, thanks to the infinite love and grace of that God who is Love, those who sorrow beside this early grave “sorrow not as those who have no hope,” still so mysteriously sharp and sudden was the sundering between her who was thus taken and those who are left, that not only all the support vouchsafed from above is needed to bear them through this afflictive dispensation, but all the ministering aid of Christian friendship is due, and should gladly be tendered

to mourners under such circumstances. It is therefore that with entire readiness, though not without a deeply-felt pang that I have undertaken, at the request of parents long known and valued, to arrange and thus introduce to the few friends for whom they are intended the following "remains" of the dear child in whose desk they were found, after her departure from earth. A very few words will suffice for this purpose, as, indeed, the documents speak for themselves.

I shall not trust myself to say anything respecting my personal feelings, on this solemn and sad, though in the best sense, privileged occasion. It was my privilege to admit, by baptism, MARY FRANCES, in her infancy, to Christ's Church. I watched with that hopeful pleasure which Christ's Ministers are allowed to enjoy, her opening years—saw her, alas prematurely! ripen into an intellectual girl, from a bright and happy, and withal, most affectionate child. Opportunities for mental culture not always, or often, met had been afforded her, by kind and anxious Christian parents; and all their aspirations were answered in her steady growth in knowledge, as well as in grace. The health of a near relative necessitated a residence on the Continent, and thus separated her from the home which she so deeply loved, during the Winter of last year, and the Spring of this. While on the Continent, at Cannes, she was an attendant on the ministry of the British Chaplain there, the Rev. Edward L. Neville Rolfe, and it would appear that during that time her impressions of Divine truth were much deepened and

realized. MARY FRANCES having been for some time affected with dulness of hearing, and the kind Minister above named, becoming acquainted with this fact, he not only took pains to have her provided with a convenient seat, in the English Chapel, where she could hear his voice, while preaching, but was in the habit of lending her his manuscript sermons afterwards. This privilege she greatly prized, and proved her sense of it by transcribing, in a very neat and legible hand, the entire of several discourses heard under these circumstances. These were the sermons which seemed most to lay hold on her memory, and in more than one of them will be found thoughts which *now* render them peculiarly interesting to those who knew and loved her. Indeed, on a survey and retrospect of the few closing months of her brief career there can be no doubt that the Good Shepherd thus drew aside from the thronged pastures of His flock this lamb of His choice, in order that she might the more plainly and believingly hear his voice. Through the kind permission of Mr. Rolfe, these records of his ministerial intercourse with her whom it was his privilege thus, though at the time unconsciously, to aid for her passage over Jordan, are here committed to the press. Their perusal is intended for the friends who knew and loved her who thus transcribed them, little thinking, it may be, at the time, the use which was to be made of them. May it please the God of all grace, who "moves in a mysterious way," to render them useful to all of the limited circle to whom they thus come! If only one of that circle—it may be of the young

and loving who knew MARY FRANCES—be impressed with realizing thoughts of the great truths, thus embalmed in the memory of a dear departed one, the effort of those who present them will be more than repaid.

Together with the transcribed Sermons will be found a few specimens of versification, from the pen of MARY FRANCES. These have been added chiefly for the gratification of friends who would otherwise not see these early indications of a talent which God had given her, and which, had she been spared, might have ripened into a decided poetical taste. With the exception of the last—the translations from the German—they were all written from the age of thirteen to seventeen years. Her parents, concurring in the advice of the writer of these few introductory remarks, felt it prudent rather to repress than encourage, at her early age, this desire to commit her thoughts to verse, fearing, as they did, lest it might tend to over-stimulation of mind and brain. The fear proved to be too well founded; but the few fragments of the sort which remain are not now the less prized because of that fewness. The same tender tone of thoughtfulness and piety which marked her whole brief earthly career, and especially its close, is very plainly observable here. “Life’s early promise” was certainly well marked in these artless, and most sweetly natural strains of childhood. Let us hope and believe that the heart and tongue which gave them utterance will awaken from the calm³ and blessed sleep where they are, for the present, laid,

only to give more glorious and blessed testimony to that Redeemer's love which shone on their possessor here, in the region of life and immortality above.

The translations from the German were made but a few weeks before MARY FRANCES closed her eyes on earth. As already mentioned, she had spent the Winter at Cannes, and hastened, with a most earnest longing homeward. The grievous disease which terminated life was of but few days' continuance, and its consummation awfully sudden. Her home was regained on the 5th of May, and her death occurred on the 16th. During its rapid progress she had but few intervals of unclouded reason, for the brain proved, ultimately, its seat. In these, however, her every word and thought were Heavenward, mingled with breathings of the deepest and most tender affection to the parent to whom, in God's mysterious providence, it was allotted to keep watch unwearied by her bed-side during life's last struggle. Contrary to the affectionate belief of the friends who were near, she more than once said it was her last illness. These expressions were then believed to be but the result of the incoherency of the disease; but they proved to be only too true. There was no single shadow of darkness at the close. All was bright and pure, calm, tranquil, and happy, and her last intelligent and intelligible words were—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Very shortly before, in a sort of happy, half-dreaming consciousness, she had uttered what proved to be an appropriate epitaph for her early grave—and here it is—

“My wreath is won—
My short course run!”

While preparing for the press this brief record, the writer has been reminded of a fact which, although in itself, apparently trivial, he yet thinks may be fitly noticed. The day on which MARY FRANCES breathed her last, although in Spring time, was an unusually dark and clouded one. Just as her eyes closed on earth, and as the friends around watched over her, a bright streak of sunshine, almost a momentary one, suddenly lighted up the heavens, and cast its gleam over the face of her, then sleeping her last sleep. This incident suggested more than one thought to those who witnessed it. It seemed a message from above, where all is light and life, and where sorrow and sighing, cloud and darkness never come.

“A beam from heaven is sent to cheer
The pilgrim on his gloomy road;
And angels are attending near
To bear him to their bright abode.

“O Lord, that we may thus depart,
Thy joys to share, thy face to see,
Impress thine image on our heart,
And teach us now to walk with thee.”

May “the God of all consolation” comfort those who mourn, with the assurance that this child of early promise “sleeps in Jesus;” and may His good Spirit lead each and all who receive this Memorial to seek, and to obtain, that “when He appears we shall appear with Him in glory,” through that abounding grace which is offered to the chief of sinners.

REMAINS.

THE few following remains of MARY FRANCES PRESTON were found, after her decease, in her writing desk. Although the productions of childhood and of earliest youth, they are appended to the foregoing brief memorial for the gratification, and it may be hoped, the profit of the friends who shall peruse these pages under the influence of those feelings which they are so well calculated to produce. The whole is an offering of Friendship, consecrated by the holiest of associations, and as such it will be received.

These Remains, it will be seen, are in verse, and also in prose. The latter were written, almost entirely, as school exercises, but seemed to the compiler to present so striking a promise of future talent, had it pleased God to spare the writer, that they ought not to be allowed to perish. The verses are the product of the same early age, and are given just as written, with the exception of a very few slight verbal alterations. No idea has been either added or altered.

W. McL.

Belfast, Sept. 1, 1865.



SHE is not dead, but sleepeth
The sleep no care may break ;
For ONE beside her keepeth
Fond vigil 'till she wake.
'Tis HE, whose presence lighted
The darkness of the grave ;
Who led her, unaffrighted,
Through death's enclosing wave.
She sleeps—but oh ! to waken
When past is sorrow's night ;
And shade and cloud have taken
Their everlasting flight ;
When earth's loud anthem swelleth
To praise redeeming love ;
And Life's full fountain wellet
With joys untold above.





HYMN.

COME unto me! the Saviour said,
All ye that weary are :
Come unto me, and ye shall find
Sweet rest from all your care.
Look unto me! and be ye saved,
Who cry with humble heart :
Lord, teach us to believe and know,
That Thou the Saviour art!
Help us to look to Thee by faith,
And feel that Thou alone
Canst save, and by thy precious blood
The sinner's guilt atone.
Here, Lord, before thy mercy-seat
Accept our humble prayer,
May we, in all our troubles seek
And find a refuge there!

February 28, 1858.

THE CHILD'S DREAM OF HEAVEN.

MOTHER, I dreamed, the other night
When you had gone to bed,
When on my pillow soft and fair,
I laid my weary head :
Oh ! then I dreamed that far away
There is a land of love,
“ And holy children, when they die,
“ Go to that world above.”
I dreamed I saw an Angel fair
Who took me by the hand,
And smiling, whispered “ Come with me
And see the better land.”
And then I went away with him
And saw a lovely sight ;
I saw that blessed land above
Where every thing is bright.
He showed me ever-blooming fields,
Of never-fading flowers ;
Oh ! such I never saw before,
In all our garden bowers.
He showed me beauteous children too,
I almost see them now,
All dressed in robes of spotless white,
Pure as the falling snow.
And each one had a crown of gold,
Sparkling with diamonds fair ;
And on each forehead was the name
Of Jesus written there.
And then I dreamed the Angel asked
If I would like to stay,

And roam amidst those fields of flowers
That never fade away?
“ Ah ! no ”—I answered—“ Let me go
And fetch my mother dear ;
For well I know she'd wish to come
And stay forever here.”
At this the Angel sadly smiled,
And said that I should come
To that fair land of Rest above,
And leave my earthly home.
And then he told me, by and bye,
That he would come for you,
To guide you to that same blest place
Where I should greet you too.
Oh ! mother dear, I hear him still,
I hear and cannot stay ;
Come—join me in that peaceful home,
Where tears are wiped away !
Smile on your child and say—farewell !
Oh ! do not—do not weep !
Fair angels call my soul away—
Mother—I go to sleep.

July 13, 1858.



LINES ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG FRIEND
AND COMPANION.

WE saw our loved one fading
And felt she soon must die ;
Our earthly hopes fast left us,
As time fled quickly by.
We knew that she was nearing
The Home of endless rest,
Her weary head to pillow
Upon the Saviour's breast.

The golden days of summer,
With all their lovely flowers,
Seemed for a while to lend us
A lingering hope for ours.
But soon their beauty faded,
Emblems of all below,
And seemed to say—"Look higher,
Where flowers unfading blow."

Alas ! we marked her pining,
We saw her colour fade—
And soon, where rest the weary,
We knew she must be laid.
But God would save our darling
We felt, from every ill,
Then to His hand we gave her,
And owned His holy will.

Then came the hour of parting—
But oh ! 'twas hard to part—
For her words had wound their memories
Like tendrils round our heart.

Her Saviour never failed her,
She rested in His love,
And soon we hoped to join her
At His right hand above.

Death had for her no terror,
For Jesus was her stay—
That Home she loved and longed for,
Where tears are wiped away.
Our faith could see her mounting
Above both cloud and sky,
Where smile the blessed mansions
Of the Redeemed on high.
Her crown we saw her casting
The Saviour's throne before,
Then joyed we with our loved one,
And wept for her no more.

January 6, 1859.

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L I N E S,

ON SEEING A BUST OF THE LATE PRINCE CONSORT, IN THE  
INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION, SEPTEMBER 15, 1862.

ALBERT, Britannia mourns thy loss,  
Thou wert her joy and pride,  
Ah! sadly too our widowed Queen  
Shall miss thee from her side.  
She'll miss the gentle voice that oft  
Had soothed her bosom's care;  
She'll miss thee in her halls of state  
At home; yes, everywhere.

Often, in dreams, again she'll see  
Thy loved form by her side,  
As at the altar once she stood  
Her Albert's blushing bride.  
That face in life that on her beamed  
In death sleeps calmly now,  
While cold the cypress wreath is twined  
Around that marble brow.  
And sadly drooping o'er thy tomb  
The white camelias bend,  
As though they too would weep thy fate,  
And mourn thy early end.  
Yes! ever in thy Consort's heart  
Wilt thou remembered be,  
And long as life and memory last  
Albert! she'll think of thee.  
'Twas she who wreathed those drooping flowers,  
And strewed them o'er thy bier;  
While every spot that tells of thee  
Recalls the bitter tear.  
No more around her sinking form  
Thine arms of love are thrown,  
Ah no! she's left to struggle on  
And breast life's cares alone.  
ALONE!—SHE knows the meaning deep  
That sad, sad word conveys;  
While back to memory it brings  
Visions of bygone days.  
She sees again thy manly form,  
Thy soft yet speaking eye,  
Again she hears that lost, loved voice  
Her sweetest melody.

Again her memory rests on thee,  
When that last hour had come  
One look—one smile, and thou art gone  
To thy eternal home.  
And now,—when all in tribute join  
To thee—the Great—the Good—  
A nation's flowing tears shall soothe  
Her lonely widowhood.  
But oh ! our tears were powerless  
To comfort her we love,  
Were there no hope of meeting in  
That happier home above.  
There death-divided friends shall join  
To sing the Saviour's praise ;  
And there, around His glorious throne  
Their endless anthems raise.  
When Jordan's narrow stream is crossed  
And all earth's sorrows o'er,  
Then shall she see thee, face to face,  
And meet to part no more.

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Lines written on a visit to Fountains
Abbey, Yorkshire.

What countless changes hast thou seen
Since first those aisles were trod
By those who, far from scenes of strife,
Withdrew to worship God.
Long ages since have passed away,
Yet still thy stately form
And vaulted arches have outlived
The waste of Time and storm.

Now ivy mantles o'er thy walls
And crowns each hallowed spot,
While from the dewy turf up-springs
The wild Forget-me-not.
The aged yew, though bent with years,
Still spreads its branches hoar,
As though it fain would weep with thee
The days that are no more.
The swallow wings its rapid flight
Throughout thy ruins gray,
The nightingale chants requiems sweet,
For those long passed away.
And from each lowly grave I hear
Voices, which say to me,
"Set not thy heart on things of earth
Attractive though they be.
For like the rainbow's varying hues
Swiftly they fade and die,
One moment all is bright,—the next
Each beam has left the sky.
And thus it is with earthly joys,
A few brief hours they last;
Though some—but ah! how few! still leave
Bright traces where they've past.
Yet e'en tho' bright things droop and die,
Pilgrim! regret them not:
Still onward! to the better land
Where grief is all forgot."
Then hearken to the voice ye hear
Prepare for that bright home
Where all is peace and loveliness,
Where changes never come!

July 3, 1863.

Translations from the German.

ABSCHIEDSLIED.

WE part, but not for ever,
We part to meet again ;
Where wail of grief comes never,
Nor sigh of mortal pain.
Few are the hours of pleasure
In this drear world below,
Yet they cheer us on our journey,
As heavenward we go.
Like beams of moonlight streaming
Through midnight's cloudy sky,
On summer flowrets blooming
Ere they fade away and die.
We too, like them, are fading
And drooping, day by day ;
And soon, in silence sleeping
Shall mix with kindred clay.
But death has lost its horrors,
The grave, though dark it be,
Is but the portal leading
To immortality.
Soon shall our toils be over,
Then on that happy shore
Within those many mansions
We'll meet to part no more.

Harrogate, June 23, 1864.

H Y M N .

“ Wenn einst mein Hundlein komen ist.”

MINE hour appointed is at hand,
Lord Jesus Christ! attend me ;
Beside my bed, my Saviour, stand,
To comfort, help, defend me ;
Into Thy hands I will commend
My trembling soul at my last end—
How safe in thy sweet keeping!

Countless as sands upon the shore
My sins are thronging round me,
But though they grieve and wound me sore,
They cannot yet confound me :
My sins are numberless I know,
But o'er them all thy blood doth flow,
Thy wounds and death uphold me.

Lord thou hast joined my soul to thine
In bonds no power can sever,
Grafted in thee, the Living Vine,
I shall be thine for ever.
Lord when I die, I die to thee,
Thy precious death hath won for me
A life that never endeth.

Since thou hast risen from the grave
The grave cannot detain me ;
“ Christ died”—“ Christ rose again” to save,
These words shall still sustain me ;

For where thou art there shall I be,
That I may ever live with thee,
This is my joy in dying.

To thee, Lord Jesus Christ, I will
With arms outstretched betake me;
I sleep in thee—so sound, so still,
No mortal man can wake me!
For Jesus Christ God's Son I wait,
To open me the heavenly gate,
Which leads to life eternal.

October 2d, 1863.

H Y M N.

“Herr lass mich in Frieden fahren.”

LORD let me now depart in peace,
Here would I fain no longer roam;
O bid my cares and troubles cease,
And call Thy weary servant home.
Gladly I'll lay my weapons down,
Exchange the sword for Victor's crown,
To Thee resign my parting breath,
For in Thy strength I vanquish death.

From each earthly fetter breaking
Joyously I soar to thee,
Dread not the last great awak'ning
For thou art mine eternally.

Though my body day by day
Slowly into dust decay,
Upwards my glad spirit flies
To its mansion in the skies.

When the weary eye is closing
Calm and joyful will I be,
E'en whilst in the grave reposing
Thou wilt still watch over me.
Yes, I feel that naught can ever
Me from thy loved presence sever;
Death to hold me tries in vain,
I through thee shall rise again!

Father, to thy tender keeping
I my trembling soul commend,
O be with me and uphold me,
Guide and guard me to the end.
Crown me with thy joy at last,
When through the dark vale I've passed
Lead me to that blissful shore,
To the loved ones gone before.

When the last dread hour shall try me
Jesus be Thou near my side;
With Thy grace if Thou supply me,
Naught but good can ever betide.
In my arms I hold Thee fast,
O receive my soul at last;
If Thou camest, Lord, to-day,
Gladly would I haste away.

Cannes, January 15th, 1865.

Prose—School Exercises.

“TRUTH STRANGER THAN FICTION.”

TRUTH stranger than fiction, how can that be? was the first question that presented itself to my mind on hearing that such was to be the title of our composition. And now, what can be stranger than fiction? Can anything be stranger than the absurd, not to say silly, anecdotes of those heathen gods and goddesses; for example, Hercules and his twelve labours? Was there ever in the memory of any person in existence, such an animal as a hind with copper feet, which he is said to have vanquished on some mythical mountain, of which, however, I cannot now remember the name; or has any one ever seen such a thing as a centaur—a creature half human, half animal; or does any one know of a woman who was changed into a fountain for giving way to her maternal feelings and deploring the loss of her numerous, and no doubt, interesting family? or of a famous hunter, who was remorselessly changed into a stag for disturbing a goddess while bathing? or of a river with golden sands? or of a Pegasus which was the special property of Apollo and the Muses? and I certainly think it is just as well, for the sake of fiction, that he belonged to such noble owners. So much for fiction. Now let us look on the other side of the picture, and try and find out how it is that Truth can be stranger still. On a bright winter's night when the silvery moon sheds her pale light o'er the sleeping

earth, and sparkling in that light, the hoar frost begems the blades of grass ; when the hum of voices is hushed in the silent thoroughfare, and all nature like a wearied child lies wrapped in profound repose ; let us look at the bright starlit heavens and say will not the question naturally arise, is it true that those lovely stars are directed during their long wanderings through their boundless orbits, and that the pale moon, the mistress of the night, is subject to the same Omnipotent guidance ; that her rising and setting, waxing and waning, are all under the same Almighty controul ? Is it true that the blazing sun pursues his never-ending course around the heavens in obedience to the same divine command ? That the ocean's billows rise and fall, are lashed into fury or hushed into rest by the same Divine Being who, more than 1800 years ago, said to Galilee's waves "Peace be still?" I answer, assuredly so ; and as long as time exists the silvery moon, the twinkling stars, the blazing sun, and the foaming billow will remain as mute but powerful witnesses to the fact that "Truth is stranger than fiction."

January 10th, 1862.

"THE BEST OF MEN ARE BUT MEN AT
THE BEST."

THIS is a very common saying, but although so common it is nevertheless true. All men have their failings—the ardent impetuous Luther ; the bold, courageous Knox ; the timid, shrinking Cranmer ; the meek, gentle Melancthon ; all, though doubtless to be ranked amongst the greatest men that ever lived, were yet but "men at the best." Let us take examples from some of these :—In the early morning of the summer

of 1517, when hardly any one is yet stirring in the old town of Wittenberg, see a monk of dauntless mien and flashing eye walk up to the market-place, and, after having affixed a printed paper on to the most conspicuous part of the building, retrace his steps again to his humble cell. Need it be said that monk was Luther, and the paper a copy of his famous "Theses," which soon spread over the length and breadth of the land, and became, under God's blessing, instrumental in paving the way for the downfall of Popery. All honour to the brave man who, amidst the fiercest persecution from the most implacable of enemies, had still the courage to propagate opinions which he conscientiously believed to be right. Then again the scene changes, and certainly not for Luther's advantage. In the same tower there is a blazing fire lit in one of the principal squares, and in the presence of a multitude of students and people, Luther walks up to it and casts in a copy of the Pope's bull, amidst the loud acclamations of the assembly. Then we see a prelate of mild and venerable appearance, in the presence of a number of other Bishops, by whom he is evidently looked up to, revising and composing that Litany which was afterwards destined to be, next to the Bible, the chief support of the Church of England. But let us see that same prelate a few years later, when his popularity, under the fiery persecution of the bloody Mary, was fast ebbing away—when threatened by death unless he should renounce those opinions he had laboured so earnestly to propagate—urged by those who called themselves his friends, see him in an *unguarded* moment sign a paper by which he declared he would retract those doctrines of which he was formerly such a warm supporter. But to his honor be it said, he atoned soon after for this deed of weakness with his life.

Even to come down to our own days and take as an example the illustrious Prince who has lately gone to his rest, "Albert the Great, the Good," ever foremost in all philanthropic designs—whose ear was never closed to the appeals of the oppressed—a tender, loving husband, a fond, judicious father, and who will not exclaim, "O, he was one of the best of men." Granted; none will attempt to dispute it, such was undoubtedly the case, but still there are few even amongst those who most strenuously uphold his memory, who will not also acknowledge he was but man at the best. But now that the cold grave hides from our sight the form we loved so well, now that the voice, once the delight of the widowed mother and her fatherless children, is hushed and silent in death, oh let us not seek to unveil his faults; let us rather look on the bright side of the picture and say with the poet—

"Oh, be his failings covered by his tomb,
And twining laurels o'er his ashes bloom."

October 20th, 1862.

S N O W - F A L L .

SILENTLY and softly it falls from the overcharged clouds, clothing hill and dale, mountain and valley, the lordly oak and the lowly heather with its feathery mantle, making our beautiful world look still more beautiful, and throwing out into bold relief the scarlet berries of the holly as they gleam brightly forth from amidst the fairy-like covering with which the dark green leaves are draped, heralding the approach of "Old Father Christmas," and picturing to our imaginations bright visions of the joyous scenes and cheerful greetings of that festive season.

November 22, 1862.

THE STORY OF AN IVORY BROOCH.

It is true I am only a piece of ivory, and, as such, I cannot be expected to have a very romantic tale to relate, yet I have travelled over hundreds and thousands of miles and seen very many different countries; so I think, as I have been so much in the world, my story is on the whole entitled to some consideration. I first saw the light in the forests of Asia, where my possessor (a huge elephant) wandered all day in unrestrained freedom amidst the tangled thickets of his native wilds, feeding on the tender branches of the trees and young shoots of grass, and quenching his thirst at some limpid stream. This state of things continued for some time, during which period I became larger and thicker, and I suspect my fine appearance attracted the notice of some elephant-hunters, who seemed resolved to possess me. After many attempts they succeeded in doing so. Never shall I forget that day. My owner was quietly reposing after the fatigues of a long march he had taken in company with some other elephants, when all at once he was alarmed by a succession of unearthly sounds, which I afterwards found proceeded from a number of drums which some hunters were beating, seemingly in the last stage of desperation.

Hastily starting off to what he took to be the only outlet (as there were fires in every other direction), my frightened owner got entangled in a perfect maze of labyrinths, from which all his ingenuity could not extricate him, and, after being kept without food some three or four days, he was quickly despatched, as, being rather aged, he was considered unfit for further use. I was taken off with much difficulty, for being very much attached to my poor master, I naturally resisted leaving him as long and as strongly as possible; but at

length I was carefully packed up in a case with a number of my former companions, whose masters had shared the same fate as mine, and, after much journeying, I was at length permitted to see the light once more at a Swiss chalêt on the banks of the lovely Lake of Geneva.

Never shall I forget the transcendant beauty of the scene thus unexpectedly opened before me. The windows of the chalêt looked out on that beautiful lake so often and so justly celebrated by travellers and poets, which was then tinged with the bright golden and crimson rays of the setting sun, and the ripple of each wave as it gently broke on the beach was the only sound which disturbed the perfect stillness that reigned around. Then behind the chalêt towered the lofty summits of the snow-capped mountains in all their majestic beauty, whose peaks, as they seemed to pierce the very clouds, also partook of the brilliant coloring of the lake. Then as the sun sank to rest, the gorgeous tints gradually gave place to the more sombre hues of night, and soon all was enveloped in darkness.

Then I bethought myself of examining my new abode, and for the first time I perceived a female figure reclining on a lowly pallet in the corner, whilst one who seemed to be her brother was preparing a cooling draught for his invalid sister.

"Thanks for all your care, dear Fritz," said she, as he took it to her bed-side, "sometimes I feel I shall not need it long."

"Oh do not say that, my own one," replied her brother, as he fondly stroked her cheek, "only wait till the bright, happy spring time comes, and then you'll soon be all right again."

Bertha smiled sadly but did not reply, and all was again silent. Presently Fritz arose and, after having examined me, said, "See, Bertha, what a lovely piece of ivory! I'm sure I can carve something beautiful out of that, only I must go out to-morrow and hunt the chamois, so that I may take it for a model. Do you think you are well enough to be left alone?"

"Oh yes, Fritz, do not fear for me, I shall not mind; but do not venture too near the precipices, and then I shall not be uneasy about you."

"That's a good Bertha; now mind you keep your promise and I shall keep mine; that's a good bargain, isn't it?"

"Remarkably so," replied Bertha, smiling, "and now I think you had better follow up your good beginning by retiring early to rest, as you will have a fatiguing day to-morrow."

"Well said, Bertha; you are really becoming a model of wisdom. Go on in that line and you'll soon equal Minerva herself," said Fritz laughingly, as he fondly kissed her. "Good night dearest; mind nightmares of brothers falling headlong over precipices don't figure prominently in your dreams, else the upshot of the matter will be I shall have to stay at home all to-morrow, and that won't be over agreeable, as I have no work to do, and I can't possibly carve without models. I'm convinced if I can only watch the chamois bounding over the precipices and catch their attitudes, I shall contrive quite a respectable brooch out of this superb piece of ivory. But if I chatter here in this strain you'll never go to sleep, nor I either, that's clear, so I'll take my departure. Good night again, dearest," and he took up his candle and left the apartment.

On the following morning, ere yet the rays of the rising

sun had illumined the lofty peaks of the distant mountains Fritz was up, and, having taken a supply of rye bread for his sustenance during the day, he wished Bertha "good bye," and set off on his expedition.

On he went through fields and valleys clothed in luxuriant verdure, where some flocks of Alpine cattle were already grazing up the steep sides of the mountain, till at last the village looked like a mere speck in the distance, and he found himself amidst the glittering glaciers and yawning abysses over which the graceful chamois bounded in perfect safety.

At length the shades of evening clothed the mountain tops with their glowing rays, and Fritz began to retrace his steps towards the village, which he reached just as the sun was setting.

"Well, Bertha, how have you got on all day," said he, as he entered the apartment, "I hope you have not been uneasy, for you see I kept my promise about the precipices; did I?"

"O yes; I knew you would do that, but I was beginning to think you must be very cold and hungry, for you have not had much to eat all day."

"That proves I shall enjoy my supper all the more," said Fritz; "the more so, as I am quite satisfied with my day's labour. I have watched the chamois all day, and I shall begin to-morrow to carve something out of that piece of ivory. I am quite sure I shall succeed."

"You certainly speak hopefully enough, Fritz, and as far as I am concerned I wish you all success in your laudable undertaking; and now I must really get supper ready, for I am not nearly as fatigued as usual this evening, and I may as well get it ready as you; don't you think so?"

"Well, I am not quite clear on that point, but I suppose

so. Mind do not tire yourself too much, else I shall have to officiate as cook to-morrow, and you know I am not remarkable for my success in that department."

While this conversation was going on Bertha had prepared the frugal meal, and both sat down to enjoy it. As soon as the repast was finished, and whilst Bertha busied herself in putting away the things, Fritz seated himself by the fire, and after having examined me attentively for some time he at length began operations on my surface, much to my discomfiture, as the process of polishing is not very agreeable. Time wore on, and each day Bertha grew weaker and weaker, till at length she was unable to leave her bed. More devotedly than ever did Fritz now attend to the slightest wish of his dying sister; day by day he sat by her side and talked to her whilst proceeding with his carving. Soon she became too weak even for the sound of his voice, and it was evident her end was drawing nigh. It was a beautiful summer's evening, Bertha had been reposing quietly all day, and had felt freer from pain than usual. Fritz was sitting by her bedside when all at once she raised herself up and said, "Fritz, I want you to bring me nearer the window, I should like to see the lake and the mountains for the last time." Tenderly he raised her in his arms and bore her to a couch near the door. The lake looked just as it did the night of my arrival, only I thought all nature seemed more hushed and still than ever. For a time neither spoke, at length Bertha said, "Fritz, you must not mourn me when I am gone. I know you will be very lonely for a time, but then you know we shall meet again, where there will be no more pain or sorrow or parting. Bury me where our parents lie in the lovely church-yard, and then when you look at my

grave you will know I have gone to join them, and will try to meet me there too ; won't you, Fritz ?”

“ Oh, yes, dearest, indeed I will ; but, Bertha, I don't know what I shall do without you. I shall be so lonely when I come home and there is no one to welcome me,” and his tears flowed fast.

“ But, Fritz, you would not wish me back again, only to suffer pain and sickness. You know I am only going home first, and you'll soon follow me. Read the 14th chapter of St. John, dearest,” and Fritz read, “ Let not your heart be troubled, in my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you I go to prepare a place for you.” The sacred words soothed the aching heart of her brother, and fell as balm on the ear of the dying girl.

“ Thank you, dearest,” she said after a pause, “ I'm getting weaker ; I shall soon be at home now.” She sank exhausted on her pillow.

Fritz bent over her and softly whispered, “ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” And then, seeing she heard him, he repeated, “ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

“ He paused, unwilling to say more, fearful lest she should pass away without his knowledge he bent tenderly over her ; she opened her eyes, looked at him earnestly and said, while light as if from heaven lit up her worn features, “ I am nearly home ; sing “ Rock of Ages,”—then she closed her eyes and her happy spirit passed away as he sang—

“ While I draw this fleeting breath,
When mine eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See thee on thy judgment throne ;
Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.”

A few days after Bertha's happy death I was again packed up carefully in a box, with several other brooches Fritz had finished during her illness. It was so mournful now since her death I really did not wish to stay longer, and as for poor Fritz my very heart ached when I looked at him, he seemed so utterly alone, and almost without spirit or inclination for even the slightest exertion. It was a bright autumn day when I was put on board a steamer and sailed down the lovely lake endeared to me by so many pleasing recollections. After travelling some days and undergoing a vast amount of shaking and jolting, I was at length unpacked in a jeweller's shop in London. Being most beautifully carved I attracted a good deal of attention, and also, I confess, underwent a considerable amount of handling of not the gentlest description. I was placed in the window, where, in spite of my beauty, I remained for so long that my pin was beginning to get quite rusty from idleness, and I was longing to be sold to some one, for I was quite sure anything would be better than the useless life I now led. One day, whilst musing on my present condition and contrasting it with my sojourn in Switzerland, I was aroused by feeling myself roughly handled and pulled about to see if my pin was firmly put in, and finally I was put in a small box which sunk like lead into the bottom of a coat pocket of the most capacious dimensions, from which I was finally drawn after the lapse of three or four days. During this time I think I must have been

travelling again, as, when I was next brought to light I found myself in the comfortable parlour of a beautiful mansion at the Trossachs, where I soon found out that my new owner, a young lady of nineteen, the pride of her father's heart, for she had lost her mother at an early age, soon became much attached to me, and I to her, and I accompanied her wherever she went. I used to go with her when she mounted her rough Highland pony, when, taking the Bible in her pocket, she set off to read to some aged woman the words of truth and life. Often have I seen her cheer, by her angel presence, the bedside of some departing soul, whom she would soothe by her tender care and attention, and to whom she would devoutly read portions of those Scriptures which had become so precious to her; and then would she watch by the bedside of the humble peasant till the day broke and the shadows of earth for ever fled away, then turn her horse's head to ride home to her father's lordly mansion. Day by day passed happily away in efforts to benefit her countrymen, till at length her overworked frame could stand out no longer, and she too lay down to die. Calmly and peacefully she passed away from earth, like a parting sunbeam shedding glory all around. No terrors marked her deathbed, and joyfully she yielded up her spirit into the hands of him that gave it, and departed to be forever with the Lord.

And now my short tale is ended. For myself I begin to think my career of usefulness is over. I am no more permitted to go about doing good, but am kept by the fond father as a precious relic of his departed child. And daily I bring before his mind her bright image and happy death, so in this way I hope I may still be permitted to be of some use.

S E R M O N ,

*Preached by the REV. E. NEVILLE ROLFE, in Christ Church,
Cannes, Sunday afternoon, the 30th October, 1864.*

“But if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost.”—2 COR. iv. 3.

THERE is something very sad as well as very solemn in these words of St. Paul. It must have sent a feeling of sorrow into his heart, to think that his Gospel was hid. For it had been the whole object and business of his life to make that Gospel plain—to declare it to all men—to proclaim it at all times and in all places. And this was the gospel, the good news which he was commissioned to declare—that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

And to him in an especial manner had been committed this word of reconciliation. He was sent, not of man, neither by man. He had not conferred with flesh and blood. Directly instructed by God, immediately sent forth by the Lord Jesus, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit forth went that noble herald to proclaim the means by which lost sinners might be raised from death to life. Truly in this work he counted not his life dear unto him. He knew well that good though his news might be—glorious as the Gospel of God might appear to those who received it—yet, that there were indeed no light difficulties in the way, and that, as the Ambassador of Christ, he was to discharge no peaceful office, but was buckling on armour against no mean power, no despicable adversaries.

He had first to address the Jew. To him he must say, "those rites and ordinances on which you pride yourself are now mere empty husks; your nation is now no longer the only highly favoured one. The kingdom of God is offered to every creature under heaven." When he spoke to those in authority, he had to upbraid them with the cruel and unjust murder of the Holy One of God. He turned, in discharging his commission to the Gentile to him he had to say, "Every altar, though your ancestors have revered it, must be thrown down. Every one of your gods is false and powerless. Your religion may have the sanction of authority, of magnificence, of power, but it must fall, every shred of it, before the Cross of One executed as a malefactor at Jerusalem. You must abolish your own, and receive a totally new religion from a conquered race—a nation whom you have been accustomed to hate and to despise."

Was it an easy task to preach the gospel of the once despised Nazarite to such hearers as these? And you and I believe that, behind those open and visible enemies were ranged powers invisible and terrible; great in their hatred of God, earnest and untiring in checking good, zealous in promoting and fostering evil. "We contend," says this ardent preacher of the gospel, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness (or as you will find the words rendered in the margin of your Bible), wicked spirits in high places."

We look at the message of love and mercy sent to mankind by a gracious God. We wonder how it could possibly be rejected. We look upon the messenger and we say, how can such zeal, such love, such presence of the Spirit of God

be executed in vain? We look upon those to whom it was delivered, and we wonder how it should ever make its way. It *could* not have made its way but by the power and the hand of God.

And so Saint Paul looks upon his work and cannot hide from himself the sad truth, that from many his Gospel was hid; that they heard it, but they heard it all only with the outer ear, looked upon it idly with the outer eye; that it was *hidden*, they heeded it not—were none the better for hearing it. They were lost, and the gospel itself could not save them.

O good Lord! and is it thus that Thy work shall fail? Shall a holy, zealous, self-denying apostle, breathing Thy spirit, upheld by Thy powerful grace, shall he proclaim Thy love, Thy willingness to save, and yet proclaim it in vain? Shall even *his* gospel be hidden? Yes, so it even should be. Great as is the power of sovereign grace, yet would not that grace of God take man's heart by storm. Unbelief may yet reject it, and the gospel of the grace of God yet be hidden from those to whom it was sent. And if St. Paul failed, if his gospel clearly placed before his hearers, spiritually set forth in all its fulness and all its gracious power, nothing being kept back, if even that was often hidden and often ineffectual, how shall his poor successors *now* prevail to do that in which he failed—prevail to bring themselves and their hearers to receive it gladly and freely? For we go not forth as he did, fresh from the very teaching of Christ, with heavenly words ringing on the heart, holy teaching springing from the lips. We have not his zeal, his courage, his heavenly-mindedness, his single eye; if his bright flame was hidden, how shall our feeble spark shine upon the darkness? My brethren, St.

Paul's work, the Christian minister's work in every age, is the work of God and not of man. If He made use only of perfect instruments, it is but little work any of us would do for Him. He can place His treasure in earthen vessels, and He does so place it, that the excellency of the glory may be His not man's. He can even by *the foolishness of preaching* save them that believe.

And even the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the great preacher, He who ordained apostles and instituted sacraments, and was the great Corner-stone on which should be reared that glorious temple, the Church of God, even he uttered the same sad complaint, that He, even He, had laboured in vain; that He had spent His strength for naught and in vain. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life"—He offered it freely, but it was not accepted; He came unto His own and His own received Him not; even His gospel was hidden from the wise and prudent and was revealed only unto babes. At this at least He would rejoice (He the Man of Sorrows). He is only recorded once in Scripture as rejoicing, and what was the cause? that the Holy Spirit would breathe upon little children, and that they who would seek God in simplicity and truth should surely find him. My hearer, is the gospel of God hidden from you? It is an easy thing to talk about. Here at church from the first to the last you hear about it—that God is one who willeth not the death of a sinner; that He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, faithful and just to forgive us our sins; but are you claiming and receiving this gospel of the grace of God? Is it your life that you have the Lord Jesus Christ living within you?

And what are the first principles upon which that gospel

stands? Upon the statement that you are lost and ruined by nature, having no power to do any good thing, that no religious feeling in an unrenewed heart is acceptable before God, but that his Holy Spirit must first cleanse and purify before there can be any possibility of life and fruit in the sight of God.

And I ask of you—Is this great and solemn truth as a personal reality hidden from you? Are you contented to compare yourself with others, and to be satisfied with the comparison. To think of yourself—“If I am not what I ought to be, yet I am not so bad as such an one. Whatever I am I do deserve credit for such and such good qualities, and for the absence of such and such bad ones. Thank God I am no thief, no adulterer, no murderer.” Or has the Holy Ghost taught you that your heart by nature, whatever it may be in the sight of man, in the sight of His holy eyes is utterly polluted, and can only be purified by His grace. Has He taught you while you are striving earnestly to purify your heart, and to live a sober, righteous, and godly life, has He taught you that such a life (if you are able to attain it) can possess no merit before Him, but that such improvement is only the natural result of receiving Christ into your heart—that it is *His* work, not *yours*?

If you have learnt this from the heavenly Teacher, as a practical, experimental truth, from you the gospel is not hidden, it is manifested as the power, and goodness, and love of God Almighty; Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God; Christ in you the hope of glory.

But what if these things have no interest for you—if you are wishing that the sermon had been on some more interesting subject—if you are caring very little about your state before God—if you have no experience of any change,

making it life for God, and not for the world or yourselves, what must the ambassador of Christ say to you as His message? Why, that if the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are *lost*, in them whose hearts Satan has blinded and not the Holy Ghost illuminated; *lost* without God in the world, without hope in the world to come! And if this is *really true*, and they are the words of the God of Truth, not of my imagination, can you rest contented to allow matters to go on thus? Can you allow year after year of your short, terribly short life to be passing away without your seeking to catch at the salvation which God offers you through the Lord Jesus Christ; remaining a stranger to God, at a distance from Him, contented to give your thoughts to things which last only this side of your death, but which will then be as useless to you as utterly nothing, as if they had never existed?

I do not speak, God knows it! as one who arrogates any superior goodness—one who looks upon himself and a certain number of his own friends as being safe, and all others in danger of eternal damnation—but here we have before us words which are true if God is true. The word “*lost*” is His word, not mine. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost! O surely, my beloved brethren, no words which man can say in explanation of this truth, can possibly add one iota to its solemnity, or to its reality. I only pray that the Holy Spirit may impress this truth deeply on my heart and yours.

For if, day after day, you can read holy words, and they transmit no feelings to the soul, if Sunday after Sunday you can hear the Prayers, the Psalms, the Lessons, the Sermon, and all these are only outward words and outward impressions, your heart being fixed on this world, not upon the

world to come—if you hold the name of Christian and have not, nor seek to have the Spirit of Christ—if your prayers morning and evening bear no relation to your daily life, then, disguise the fact as you may, shut your eyes to it if you will, still you are surely one of those spoken of in my text, men from whom the gospel is hidden, though outwardly it is placed before them, and of whom the Holy Book speaks as “*lost*.” Let the sceptic try to exalt the mercy of God, at the expense of His justice, and deny the eternity of future punishment. This might be a very comfortable doctrine for those who take and persist in taking the wrong choice in this world, if they would only believe it, but I defy them to do so. If you live for this world, your master will do all he can to keep you quiet, but his opiates are but poor substitutes for peace and quiet trust. The devil has no happiness himself, and it is poor work to expect that he can make you happy.

Is this addressed only to the openly and outwardly vicious? By no means, it is God’s message to all, however respectable, or amiable, or esteemed, who live without Him. The two paths must lead to two very different ways. If you follow the path of pleasing self it is a downhill road; the path by which God would lead you is that of His commandments. Drawing up your heart to His love, making *that* your law—leading you to believe and to trust in the unseen—and while you walk through this world, to have your heart and your hope in the world to come. It is no *natural* process. He offers to give you grace and strength to conquer nature, for our nature is a fallen thing. To overcome self, and through this mortal life so to pass that finally you live with Him in eternal happiness, such happiness as our hearts cannot picture, our senses cannot at present enjoy.

“I need thee, precious Jesus! for I am full of sin,
The soul is dark and gloomy, and the heart is dead within.
I need Thee, precious Jesus! I need Thee day by day,
To fill me with Thy fullness, to wash my sins away.
I need Thy Holy Spirit to show me what I am,
To teach me more of Jesus, to point me to the Lamb.”

Cannes, 1864.

S E R M O N ,

*Preached by the REV. E. NEVILLE ROLFE, Cannes, Sunday,
November 13th, 1864.*

“Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.”—PROVERBS XXV. 4.

THE fact alluded to in my text is one that hardly requires any explanation. The wise man speaks of the process by which silver, found amongst much mixture of earth and baser materials is purified and brought into the bright metal we so much prize and value. The ore, rough and coarse as it comes from the mine, is subjected to great heat—it passes through the furnace. In its progress all the earthy matter and dross is burnt away. The pure silver is not destroyed, but, freed from that which had cumbered it and hid its beauty, it issues from the crucible pure, increased in value, bright and beautiful; no speck of the silver is lost, no taint of the dross remains. The workman who purifies the silver is the “refiner,” or “finer” as he is called in my text, and of him, says Solomon, “Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.” Under this simile are several truths shadowed forth which the wise man

doubtless meant to suggest by his proverb. May God's Holy Spirit place these truths before our hearts, and thus lead us to profit by the parallel.

The first idea is at once suggested by the furnace, in which the operation we have spoken of is carried on. That furnace is often employed in the Holy Scriptures as an emblem of affliction and sorrow. If the *furner* is meant to suggest to us One who would purify us from all evil—One who, in the language of the Prophet Malachi, "Shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" watching silently his work, watching its progress, the way in which the dross works off from the pure and valuable metal, we know the means He has to resort to for the accomplishment of His good purpose. He will not destroy His silver, He will only purify it; so the fire is heated and the crucible or furnace containing both the silver and the dross is exposed to its influence. In other words, the child of God is made to pass through sorrow and suffering, through much tribulation, and with what object? in order that he may be fit for the company of his Holy Father and his Good Redeemer, and the blessed angels. What workman would make a silver cup out of the rough ore? The ore is not fit for its high destiny, and must be refined and purified.

My Christian brethren, if it pleases God to call us to sorrow and suffering, here is surely comfort and encouragement for us. It is necessary for us; it is not accidental. There is an object in view, and that object, to quote the words of the beautiful prayer for the visitation of the sick, is "to correct and amend in you whatsoever doth offend the eye of your Heavenly Father;" it is to fit you for the home which Christ has prepared for you; it is sent in love and tenderness, though you may find it very hard to bear. But faint not under it;

seek that the good work which it intends to effect may really be accomplished ; that what is of earth may be purified away and left behind, and that the silver may come out of the furnace pure and bright, and fit for the Master's use. " No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceful fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby ;" and this so clearly that God's children see it and own it. They can say and mean it, when they look back upon their afflictions and see what those afflictions were intended to work, what by God's grace they have worked, " It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

But affliction and trouble are not always the means employed by the Great Refiner of sinful man. There are hearts which He is able to draw to Him with love ; hearts which during this life are, by His goodness, gradually drawn nearer to God ; hearts with which the Holy Spirit has not to strive in vain. But are such fit for heaven ? They themselves would shrink from the thought. The nearer they live to God, the clearer are their conceptions of the holiness required of those who would dwell with Him. And them God leaves yet upon earth, in order that by His grace they may employ their lives here as a preparation for eternity. And oh, my brethren, how happy are they who have learnt thus to regard their lives in this world ! Who by faith see the Great Refiner is at work upon them, purifying them, taking away their dross, their love of earth, their love of self, their pride, their censoriousness ; who see their lives as devoted to this purification, and who can see God's grace at work in their hearts, and leading them by all the circumstances of their daily lives, towards the great and all important end,

growing more charitable, more humble, more unselfish, more ready to do the work of God. Oh! there *is* such a thing as happiness in this world after all, and here it is! God give it to you and to me.

My brethren, we have read to-day a collect, epistle, and gospel taken out of the usual course. As in this year Easter fell early, and Advent is almost an immovable feast, we have more than twenty-five Sundays after Trinity, and we supply the deficiency by the use of one or more of those omitted after the Epiphany. That Collect and Epistle both reminded us that would we enjoy the happiness of making our lives here a real preparation for the kingdom of God hereafter, we *are* not to be, we *cannot* be merely passive in the world. It is quite true, in one sense, that the work is the work of God. It is equally true that we are to "purify ourselves even as His is pure." St. John says that this must be done by every man who hath in him this hope. That hope is, that a time shall come when we shall be with Him, and see Him as He is. And what does this induce? That we now set diligently to work, actively as well as passively, to purge away all that dross which makes us unlike God and unfit for heaven. We were created in the likeness of God, and He has graciously provided for us all the means of our recovering that likeness. It will not come to all by itself. Are you seeking to recover it? And that means, are you doing your best to root out all that is in your heart and in your life contrary to the will of God? And are you doing your best to encourage and to cultivate what is like God, and in accordance with His law? Are you rooting out pride, self-pleasing, luxury, uncleanness, covetousness, judgment of your neighbours, idleness? Are you increasing in purity of thought and deed, in self-denial, in charity, in humility, in heavenly-mindedness?

My brethren, I wish to turn my sermon now in a direction which I think may be practically useful to many of my hearers, and it is a direction, moreover, in which my text seems to lead us. "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer." Now what are the peculiar circumstances in which God's Providence has placed a large number of my hearers? They are by His leading hand taken away from their ordinary English life, and (doubtless with a fixed purpose if they only knew it), brought by Him into a place in which their usual habits, usual duties, usual companions are changed. This is to be possibly, their life for the next six months. Now what is the peculiar temptation which must beset such circumstances? Those of you who are thoughtful are at no loss for an answer. The danger is that you will be tempted to lead, not perhaps a frivolous life, but one that is desultory, idle, self-pleasing, and luxurious. And which of us can be the better for this? Which of us must not be very much the worse? Cut off, it may be, from any apparent duties, with the necessity, it may be, of a certain carefulness of self, which may become, unless anxiously watched, selfishness and luxury. Surrounded by neighbours similarly circumstanced, exposed to the same temptations, are you not in danger of forgetting that your time is a talent for which God will exact an account; that every hour of it must help to form the complexion of your whole life, and make it as dedicated to God, or spent in an objectless, desultory, though perhaps busy, idleness? As your appointed pastor, I would earnestly warn you against this danger. I would have you believe that you have duties here as positive as those you have left behind you, and that you need not look far for them, if you really wish to find them.

“Take away the dross from the silver.” Set diligently and earnestly to work, as a religious duty. Avoid the idle and desultory life. Divide out your time in such a manner as to make the most of it; not by a rule which it will be impossible to keep, but by one which you have a fair chance of keeping. Remember that there is hardly any one branch of knowledge which you may not turn to a good account. The mastery of a language may be work done directly for God. Anything that makes you study industriously, self-dependent, must improve your whole character. You take away much dross, if you only take away idleness. Beware of the formation of idle habits; they grow apace. Truly says the farmer’s proverb, “One year’s seed—seven years weed.”

The best moral training for any man or woman is steady work with a good object. Many no longer in leading strings envy those whose duties are marked out for them, and who are punished at once for any dereliction! Happy the child whose lessons are still set; the servant, whose work must betray itself if it be neglected. But with a large part of mankind duty is imperative and yet optional. Many a day which may go by before men cries out against our indolence, and yet not a day passes without carrying in its account to God and adding to our store of sins committed a heavy surplus of omitted duties. Having said this much against an idle and desultory life, I will now point out another part of your duty. Very few of us are alone; most of us are surrounded by those to whom God has bound us by the ties of nature and kindred. As His providence in a great degree seems to cut off from you in this place, those benevolent works which would lead you to the cottage or the school-room, the sick and the suffering—as here you are separated

by language and religion from the mass of those around you—seek to discharge more earnestly and religiously those duties which God has left to you. As a son or daughter, as a brother or sister, as a husband or wife, see if there is not room for a quiet exercise of love and kindness, in which you may hitherto have failed; at all events you cannot have overdone it. Believe that your own family, those with whom not chance but God's providence has placed you—must afford you your real and proper sphere of love and duty. Let a loving consideration for those around you mark your intercourse with them. Be patient under those little trials which must arise in the lot of every one, and which too often are allowed to upset the temper. Let your words be gentle, unselfish, inspired by love; and if you remove dross only in this particular, the winter before you will not be wasted time. Remember that the cause of God is more promoted in this world by unselfish conduct, by loving intercourse, by humble and dutiful behaviour, than it is by services and sermons. I have spoken of two matters which, after all, are still but outward matters. They are very important, and I am sure that your happiness and usefulness will be promoted by your attention to them. But there is a much more important matter, and that is—Will you seek to improve in these respects merely for the sake of the good opinion of those around you, or for the pleasure of improvement, or out of love to God and as fruits of your religion? The object in getting rid of our dross ought to be, that we may be fit for Him who gives us the strength to improve. It is this that gives our efforts at self-improvement any real value. If we can only realize the great truth that God's love has redeemed us from sin and death and brought us to Himself, and

that He is seeking to restore in us that lost image of Himself in which we were first created, and that He bids us to be fellow helpers with Him for our own benefit and happiness ; if we can only realize and believe this, then we shall set about our work with a better heart and hold to it all the more earnestly ; and, believe me, that every little thing connected with it is a part of the great whole, and of much grander importance than it appears at first sight. And we ourselves, shall we be tried in the great fire ? and which shall we prove, silver or dross ? That must depend upon our lives here—while by God's goodness we still remain members of His visible Church—and hereafter that Church shall be submitted to a searching test, and all that is not pure and real shall be destroyed in the fire. And out of that fire shall emerge the heavenly, ransomed Church of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, purged from all evil, and sin, and dross—a vessel for the finer. Ah, my brethren, which shall you and I appear on that day ; where will be our place—with the dross or with the silver ?

Once more—our position *then* must depend upon our lives *now*. Men *die* as they have *lived* ? If you have the hope of eternal life, you will not fail to do your best to purify yourself even as He is pure.

Extract from a Sermon on "Conversion," by the REV. E. F. N. ROLFE, Sunday, January 29th, 1865.

The Gospel says to us—"You are the purchased possession of God ; you belong to Him. You are His child ; do not live as a disobedient and rebellious child ; come to Him with confidence as you are, and He will receive you and

make you fit." The words of my text are simple—"Let him return to the Lord." The promise is ample—"He will have mercy upon him, He will abundantly pardon." Close with this offer, not once only, but day after day, all your life long. Seek without delay to live as the child of God in His strength. Set your face courageously against your sins; seek not only to deny the outward act, but to root out the evil desire. Do this daily in your character as a child of God, in earnest prayer seeking daily help from your heavenly Father. Let the question in your mind be, not so much "Am I converted?" but rather, "Am I *being* converted?" Is there a continuous work and growth going on within me? Do not look for and wait for a sensible change, which God may not see fit to send to you; but work on with what He has already given you; believe that He has given you light enough and help enough for your present step, and that when you have taken that, you shall have a fresh supply for the next.

SERMON,

Preached in Christ Church, Cannes, Sunday afternoon, 12th March, 1865, by the REV. E. F. NEVILLE ROLFE.

"Whereas I was blind, now I see."—ST. JOHN ix., 25.

POSSIBLY some of my hearers will connect the words of my text with the story of a blind child over whose grave were inscribed its touching and appropriate words, as though they were put into the lips of her glorified body, "Whereas I *was* blind, now I see." In this world the gift of sight had been withheld. She had never looked upon the glories of God's creation; all those bright and beautiful things which form so

large a portion of a child's delight. From her had been withheld the golden sunlight—the living picture of the earth of God—His trees, His birds, His flowers. But a change had taken place, the great change which we call death, and the eyes, useless in this world, opened now upon brighter sights, more satisfying and more enduring beauties, in the world where God dwells and where Jesus reigns, and is all in all to his happy children.

From the account of which my text is taken, the miracle has a peculiar interest, as being related by St. John. He seems always to go much deeper into detail than the other evangelists. Here he not only records the miracle, but he tells us what our Lord said and did before it and after it; shows us the feelings of the man who received the mercy, the view the disciples took of him and of his case, what the Pharisees thought and said; in short, he devotes a whole chapter to an incident which, in all probability, the writers of the other Gospels would have compressed into a few verses.

We read that our Lord passing by from the temple (in great personal danger as we learn from the end of the chapter before), saw this blind man who very likely was brought there daily to ask alms of those who went in or out at the hours of service.

The disciples took it for granted that his misfortune was the punishment of sin. They ask whether the sin thus punished had been committed by the man himself or by his parents? You must remember that the Jews held the doctrine that a soul passed from one body to another, and that a man might therefore suffer in consequence of a sin committed by his soul, that is by *himself* when in a former body. Thus they accounted for his being *born* blind.

Our Lord gave a very different reason. He tells us that the man was born blind, not as a punishment, but in order that God's works—His goodness and mercy—that God's glory should be shown forth in him.

Was not this a hard case? That a man should lose so much for such a reason?

Who shall answer against God? Hath not the potter power over the clay? And who can call anything *hard* in this world, who believes that this world is only a place of our trial, who believes in the reality of that world to come, who believes in the power of God to compensate through all eternity the sufferings through which He sees fit to call His people here? Ay, and it may be no small comfort to those who in this life are called to suffer; that their suffering whatever it may be is no chance, no accident, not necessarily even a punishment, but intended to work the glory of God; and that they may promote and further that glory, by bearing it meekly, without a murmur, looking upon it as necessary for their spiritual discipline.

Our Saviour would teach his disciples that a heavy trial, a deep sorrow, a great affliction, may have a very different aspect from that which it presents to the world, and to worldly hearts. They may commiserate the burdened man, and say that he has nothing worth living for. *Christ* says of him, "This trouble is ordered for him, so that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

We have not time to follow the miracle and the numberless thoughts which it suggests, step by step. We will pass on at once to the happy and thankful acknowledgment of him who received the gift, long withheld, and now, consequently, all the more highly valued—"Whereas I *was* blind, now I see."

This at least he knew, and was thoroughly assured of. There was no mistake about this. Others might speak hardly and speak uncharitably about his benefactor, but he could only testify to the benefit; long had he sat in darkness, but now (and God be praised!) he could see! he could *look* upon things hitherto only described to his ear, or felt by his hand. The sunlight, the landscape, the brightness of the flowers, the freshness of the trees were now realities, and he knew it; and it was a voice of thankfulness and of joy with which he cried—"Whereas I *was* blind, now I see!"

My brethren, our Saviour himself, on this very occasion, in this very chapter, seems to point to this man, exulting in his newly given blessing, and to warn the Pharisees that there is such a thing as blindness of the heart—a blindness which he had come to cure; which he *could* cure, as easily and as thoroughly as he had cured this poor man. A blindness which had fallen upon them, though they fancied they had light and sight above all others—and asked scoffingly, "Are we blind also?"

O, that the Holy Spirit of the true and loving God, may force that question into the inmost soul of you and of me! We have around us the light of Holy Scripture, the light of the Gospel, the light of the Lord Jesus Christ; glory radiating from His blessed Cross, from His Holy Church, from His opened Heaven—"And are we blind to these things?" or can we cry thankfully, "O, Lord! who searchest the heart and knowest all things, Thou knowest that 'whereas I *was* blind, now I see.'"

And is there *no* difference or only a *little* difference between these two states? Is it a *little* thing we now speak of? A change which it matters little whether or not we know it?

We dare not think of it as a *little* thing—as a *trifling* change, when Christ Himself, our Lord, speaks of it as light and darkness, blindness and sight !

But my text speaks not of the Pharisees, but rather of Him whom in their self-righteous spirit they despised and excommunicated. What would be the parallel to His case? What would be meant by one of us who could say, and say with truth, “Whereas I *was* blind, now I see !” Why it would mean that God’s Holy Spirit had breathed upon that heart, and enabled it to see that which before *was* indeed, but was hidden from it.

“*Now I see !*” I see *God’s Holy Law*. Hitherto I listened to the ten commandments and I said to myself, self-righteously, “All these have I kept from my youth up.” But now I see the breadth and extent of that holy and extreme law, a law demanding perfect obedience, not only in *deed*, but in *word*, and in *thought*. Now I see what it is that God requires of me. I thought it enough to bow my knees in His house on the Lord’s day, and to give Him a few hurried minutes which I called my prayers. I now see that he demands my *heart*, my *affections*, that I shall serve Him with all my might, my soul, my strength, that my life should be His, not given to myself and the world.

I see *this*, and I see how far I have already fallen *short* of this, that my life has been to myself, not to Him ; that I have only given Him an outward service, and not always *that*, that my prayers have been a form, that I have never known *communion* with God, that my heart has been full of sin, not of love to Him. I see the black stains upon my life. I often think harshly of my neighbour, while I *know* in my own story, that which I only *suspect* in his. I see myself, as

God only can give me the sight, and *woe is me!* What Lenten confession can depict it all; what words can describe the sinful sight? But there is *more*. Yes, God be praised, there is more, "Whereas I was blind, now I *see*." I see the Lord Jesus on the Cross, making a full atonement for all those sins, wiping them out of the Book of God. Oh! what is the Passion Week to me now. Is it a mere formal observance? Jesus, my Saviour in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the Judgment-hall, on the cross, in the grave. Is it a mere earthly history? Once it might have been, but "whereas I *was* blind, now I *see*," and I fall upon my knees, and I recognize on that Cross the Lord of Life, the Saviour of sinners, and the beautiful words of our matchless Litany arise spontaneously to to my lips, as I cry—"By Thine agony and bloody sweat, by Thy cross and passion, by Thy precious death and burial, Good Lord, deliver me." And I see Him. That He *does* deliver me I see, I know, I feel His great and undeserved love towards me—a love which sought me out, and pardoned my sin, and arrayed me with the robe of His righteousness, and poured upon me His Holy Spirit, and gave me an inner life, so that I may live as a part of Him, and realize the full meaning of my Christian baptism. I see the same choice daily before me; on the one side the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; on the other the world, the flesh, and the Devil. I see the power given me to hold fellowship with the one, to renounce and reject the other; and I kneel in Holy Christian Communion at the Holy Table. I *was* blind, *now* I see. It is not bread, it is not wine, it is the very flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, present to dwell within me, to teach me to overcome the world, to enable me to live to Him.

And in that daily life also my eyes are opened. I see it all as ordered for my discipline, and intended for my heavenly life. I can rise to a principle, that principle being to do at once, as the opportunity occurs, what my God would have me do. The time was when I rebelled and murmured at what I had to go through. I was discontented with my lot, I fretted under my burden, but now I see what that lot means, why that burden is laid upon me.

Oh, my brethren, *would to God* that I were now describing not what you and I might be, but what we *were*, that our eyes *were* thus fully opened; that we *did* thus see and never lose sight of the *real* meaning of our lives here. That we sought and found grace in God's ordinances—grace which applied a Saviour's work to our soul's necessities, and prepared us, day by day, to leave this world for a better. For then, in that other world, should our eyes really be opened. Now, what at best we see is through a glass darkly, but then it shall be face to face; then all obscurities, all difficulties shall be cleared, and what here perplexes us shall vanish like a mist before the august sun, and the throne of God and the presence of the Saviour shall be open before us. But what, my brethren, if we are wilfully closing our eyes as we walk through this life? What, if we are refusing to set them upon the world to come, upon our death, our resurrection, our judgment? What, if we are refusing to look upon the law of God, upon our sins and shortcomings, upon the Saviour on the Cross? What, if we are allowing and mean to allow year after year of our lives here to pass and leave no impression upon a callous heart—a heart given to the world. Surely this is the road that leads to *death*. It is the road which Pharaoh took, it is the road which our hearts naturally would

follow, but it is none the safer for that. We need not walk upon it, we need not close our eyes, we need not harden our hearts, for all day long doth our Saviour call us—a Saviour who would not that we or any should perish—and thus He calls us with sweet and urging voice, “Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, an easy yoke, a light burden, a seeing eye, and a loving and believing heart I offer you, and I will give you!”

SERMON,

*Preached in Christ Church, Cannes, by the REV. EDWARD
FAWCETT NEVILLE ROLFE, January 29th, 1865.*

“And He took him aside from the multitude.”—ST. MARK vii. 33.

AFTER the death of St. John the Baptist, our Lord seems to have wrought His miracles much less publicly than He had done before. From that time He seems to avoid notice—to retire frequently into the wilderness—and when He performed a work of mercy likely to attract attention, we find that He charges the person who received the benefit not to speak of it publicly. St. John gives us the clue to this. We learn from him that the people, highly indignant at the murder of one whom they justly regarded as a great prophet, were ready to take Jesus by force and make Him a King. They had seen His power, they had partaken of the bread miraculously increased on the shores of the Sea of Galilee; they were always ready for revolt, and here seemed before them the very opportunity of throwing off the Roman dominion which they hated, and setting up a king of their own—a king of tested and acknowledged power—at all events, one who could feed them.

But this was not the kingdom which our Lord had come to establish. Power such as this He rejected and declined, and therefore it was that He withdrew himself into the wilderness. Therefore it was, that when He *did* work a miracle He wrought it quietly and so as to avoid remark; and here, when in Decapolis, they brought to Him a man deaf and having an impediment in his speech, He *took him aside from the multitude* before He exerted the power which marked Him to be the Son of God, the King of Israel. This I consider to have been the reason, the main reason, why our Lord took this man aside from the multitude. But in addition to this I think we may fairly suppose that there might have been some consideration to the afflicted man himself; when the Lord took him aside from the multitude He was going to confer on that man a gift—a gift which had hitherto been withheld from him—a gift which you and I have always possessed and often abused—the power of holding communication with his fellow-man. And might not He who formed the ear and gave to man's tongue the faculty of speech, might not He well have taken this man aside from the multitude in order that, apart from all distraction and confusion, He might receive gifts which are powerful for evil or for good, that this man, who had never as a child heard his mother's voice, or gladdened her heart with one articulate sound, should be alone with Christ when he received the blessing which he sought, and that the blessing would, from the very circumstances of solemnity with which it was conferred, seem to demand more forcibly his gratitude and his service? I can hardly suppose that this result of taking the man aside could be hidden from the mind of Him who saw all things, and it is this view of our Lord's action which, my Christian brethren, I would press upon you and upon myself, as represent-

ing, possibly in more senses than one, the dealings of our Saviour with us when He would confer blessings upon our souls. Can we not then call to mind occasions and events in our spiritual history which we may look upon as parallel to our Lord's taking this man "*aside*"—apart from the multitude when he was about to show mercy upon him.

"*Aside from the multitude*"—Will not this expression recall to the minds of some a time when it seemed good to God to withdraw us from our labours and place us upon a bed of sickness within those four walls, where morning, noon, and night slipped noiselessly away, marked by hardly any external change, save from daylight to candlelight, from candlelight to dawn? Aye, that silent chamber, those dreamily-watched curtains, the hushed presence of those who looked upon us hour after hour, and wondered whether we should sink or rise, we may give that scene another name and call it not a sick bed, but the Lord Jesus taking us "*aside from the multitude.*"

Ah, my brethren, there is nothing on this side of the coffin and the grave so softening, or else so hardening; so likely to draw you near to God, or to make you callous, careless, indurated with the world, as a period of sickness alone with Jesus, near Him; because in suffering you *must* grow very much better or very much worse; much fitter for heaven, or more heavily chained to earth! O seek the grace of God! The mere fact of being *aside* from the multitude may be a spiritual blessing, but like all other spiritual blessings it requires the hand of faith to grasp it and to keep it. Religion in our hearts is not a matter of witchcraft. A period of illness has not of itself power to change the heart, or to make us accept that gospel of peace which God so

freely offers us. It is possible to be "*near the Church and far from God*," to have our eyes fixed upon the most near and impressive view of death, yet without being impressed, without one thought of judgment, or of an Advocate through whom we may face that judgment without fear! Let us never depend for salvation upon our outward circumstances!

Again, my brethren, surely many of you must feel that the idea of our text seems to describe the circumstances under which, by God's Providence, you are standing at this moment. For have we not here amongst us many whom the hand of an over-ruling God has, from one circumstance or another, withdrawn from their natural English life, from their appointed spheres of duty, from their own familiar scenes, their own loved parish church, perhaps from their own families and from faces photographed on their hearts, on which they are longing again to look? And dare we think of this separation as being a mere chance? Is it not most surely the guiding hand of the Providence of God?

Happy, my brethren, are those of us who acknowledge earnestly and heartily this practical truth! Who see, as it were, the hand of Jesus taking their hand and leading them forth—aside from the multitude—and who can realize that He has an object in doing so; that He has blessings for them, that He will open their ear that they may hear Him better, and loosen their tongue that they may praise Him the more heartily. Do not be contented with vague wishes that these blessings may be granted to you. Seek them, and you shall surely have them; though they are the *gift* of God, they do not come to the idle and the indolent. Believe that you have been brought here for a purpose, and O *that* purpose may be, to draw you nearer to God!

Further, in the lives of most of us there are certain pauses or resting places. It is impossible to describe these by terms which will apply to circumstances which are widely different. Any thoughtful person will know what I mean, and can lay his finger upon them in the chart of his past life. It might be something akin to that of which I have already spoken; it might have been an illness from which you expected never to rise; it might have been your sudden withdrawal from duties which you had long discharged, and from scenes with which your eyes and heart had grown very familiar. It might have been the removal of one upon whom you leaned; or it might have been a rich and undeserved blessing. I speak of something which seemed to change the current of your life—to be a sort of halting-place in your pilgrimage. You resume your journey, and to you the character of the scenery has changed, things are not what they were before.

Try to look upon such an epoch in your life in what may possibly be a new light to you; that is to say, apply to it the idea of our text—the Lord leading you aside—not without a motive. Have you been the better for it? or, after the first emotions have subsided, do you go on as before, as if this check, this pause had never been, living for yourself, *not* for God, *not* for eternity? I will open my text wider, and God grant I may speak plainly, may He carry it home to your hearts! For now I will speak not of the rarer and more marked events in your life, those to which I have hitherto been turning your thoughts, but of blessings and privileges which are often around you. Common as they are, they are the hands of Jesus leading you aside. I speak then of prayers, and sermons, and sacraments, of inspirations from the Holy

Spirit of God, of desires after good breathed into your heart from above, of feelings of dissatisfaction with the world, of craving after something higher, more noble, more enduring, of sorrow for past sin, of desire to live a holier, more satisfying life. Are these *real* things to you, or only things of which you read in a Sunday book, or hear of in a sermon! If they are matters utterly without interest to you, if you acknowledge to yourself (your conscience telling you) my all is here, I care for little beyond what I eat and drink and wear, I seek my pleasure *here*, my gain *here*, I think highly of what may be the opinion of my neighbours concerning me, nothing whatever of the judgment of the all-seeing God; I am taking my portion in this life, and only think of religion when it is forced upon my notice; if you confess this to yourself, what ought the messenger of God say to you? He will say to the last, that such a state, if not a state of open sin against *man*, is the state of one who is living without God, without a Saviour, and therefore without any hope whatever, except for those few short days which you call your life, and which may end at any moment; that our God is one who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn and live; that you are feeding upon ashes; that God sent His Son into the world to give you life and freedom while you are resting content with death and slavery, and that these religious privileges of which you think so little are the means employed by Him of raising you from death to life. And some of us, God be praised, have found it to be so. We have learned to look upon these prayers, and sermons, and sacraments as the act of the Lord Jesus taking us aside from the multitude so that He might bless us. We do not reverence *them* so much as *Him* working in and

through them. He sends desires after good into our hearts, we recognise them as the operation of the Holy Ghost, and we fall upon our knees and bless God and pray that, though we deserve them not, yet that we may keep them, and that they may be the spirit of our lives. We open the Bible, and there, at one time possibly more than at another, we hear the very Word of God speaking to our souls. We come into His house and kneel before Him, not because it is a good custom, but because we ask of Him things we really want. We come to His holy table and find Christ present with us, our souls are strengthened and refreshed with spiritual food; and thus God works upon us, and we, His workmanship, grow under His hands, grow in grace, grow in knowledge of *ourselves*, our wants, our frailty, our dependence; grow in knowledge of our Saviour, His fullness, His readiness to give us all we need, and to make us fit for the kingdom of God.

And at *times*, my Christian brethren, times which might recur much more frequently did we seek more honestly to walk near to God, at times does our Lord take us aside from the multitude, even as He took St. Peter, St. James, and St. John (His beloved disciple) up into the holy mountain, and show to our sight glories which are often, nay, usually shrouded from mortal sight. We live for some brief space within sight of God, we feel as if all were brightness around us, and we could trust our Heavenly Father and rest quietly upon His love, and seek nothing farther. We look upon the exceeding brightness of a Saviour's face, and of the robe in which He promises to array us, and we want *no more*. We would renounce all earthly vanities, we would no more seek our portion below, but are well contented to rest where the Lord would lead us—"Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

And *here* we might be much oftener, much longer than we are. It is not that our Saviour is unwilling to lead us aside, apart from the multitude—to take us to be with Him—but that we rather anchor our thoughts and hearts below, and will live on the earth when we *might* have our conversation in heaven. They who would thus see the comforts and glories of religion, must first be *religious*; they must live for the glory of God and not for their own pleasures, and, day by day, must learn to believe that the Lord Jesus is able and willing to give them all they want, even His holiness and His righteousness, and to lead them aside from the multitude and bring them near to God.

God grant, my dearly beloved brethren, that these happy experiences may become more and more solid realities to your soul and mine; and that when the day shall come when our Lord, who holds the keys of the unseen world, shall unlock for us that dark door, through which all mortal flesh shall pass—each one *alone*—and lead us aside from the multitude, apart from those whom we have known and loved, may He then bring us, washed and purified by His precious blood, clad in the robe of His righteousness, into that happy Paradise where the children of God shall look upon their Heavenly Father, and waking up after His likeness, shall be satisfied with it.



